

THE
BULLETIN

Official Bulletin
Of The
YORKTON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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L. T. McKim, K. C.- Melville

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OBJECTS:

To foster an active interest
in all branches of nature study,
and to promote the conservation
of all wild life; also to act
as a connecting link between
nature lovers in Saskatchewan.

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The summer of 1942 will probably be remembered as the "wet summer" unless this past season proves to be the first of a cycle of wet years. As far as bird life was concerned the most obvious result of the great increase in surface water was the large number of ducks which grew to maturity, but smaller moisture-loving birds also responded to the change over from drought conditions. In Yorkton we noticed an abundance of Maryland Yellow-throats present throughout the nesting season and Bobolinks were seen immediately east of town and on the north side of No. 11 S.F.T.S. . Until this year the only records we had of the latter were from the hay-meadows of Saltcoats and Crescent Lake.

An exceptionally heavy migration of small birds passed through this Fall. Owing however to high water all round the district and the consequent absence of mud flats we have seen very few wading birds. No outstanding records of rare birds have been noted so far this year.

This fall we have made a serious effort to collect "last seen dates" for the Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States. Recording last seen dates is not an easy matter and really requires a lot more time than most of us have at our disposal just now but it is a most fascinating side of "birding."

Our Society is proud to include as honorary members, Sgt. D. Foreman, Canadian Ordnance Corps; Gnr. D.R. Robinson, 64th Fld Bty., 21st Fld Reg., R.C.A.; and Jack Culver now with the United States Air Force. We send them all greeting, especially to "Doug" Foreman who has been in England for nearly two years, and assure them we will try and look after their "former happy hunting grounds."

Isabel M. Priestly,
President,
Yorkton Natural History Society.

LOCAL NOTES

When the Yorkton Enterprise printed a story on August 27 of a bear being seen on Darlington Street most of us were decidedly sceptical. A few days later some boys reported seeing a dark form scuttling into the bushes in the same area. Meanwhile definite news of bears visiting the berry patches at Devil's Lake was supplied by J. Gunn. It seems fires up north this summer forced the bears far south of their usual range, so possibly the Darlington Street Bear was not a myth after all.

An albino blackbird was noted by Mrs. J. R. Foreman on Aug. 8 near Wroxton, among a flock of normally colored Brewer's Blackbirds. Later in the season Mrs. J. Pierce of Rokeby, when driving to Yorkton, also saw a perfectly white bird among a flock of about thirty or forty blackbirds. Probably this was the same bird Mrs. Foreman saw.

Not until after the birds had gone did we hear that a pair of Mountain Bluebirds had nested in an iron pipe protecting the guy wire of an electric light pole on Third Ave., South this summer and what is more, had successfully raised two broods. The young birds, according to Charlie Gordon, used to gather on the wires overhead and he got a lot of pleasure watching their playful flutterings. This is our first nesting record of this species for Yorkton. We see both the Mountain Bluebird and Eastern Bluebird in migration, sometimes in considerable numbers, but for some reason they don't seem to like our district as a summer home and apparently very few nest around here.

From F. Baines of Crescent Lake comes an interesting story of an encounter between a godwit and a crow. A Saltcoats farmer while hauling grain was watching a pair of Godwits. A crow came idling by and without a moment's hesitation "Mr" Godwit rose up and sailed in from behind to attack and the crow collapsed in mid-air. Apparently the latter threw back its head at the moment of contact and received a blow which broke its neck as the bird was quite dead when the farmer walked over a few hundred yards to pick it up. The Godwit in the meantime "flew over to his mate and seemed quite satisfied to call it just another day of ordinary interest."

This Fall we have not only noticed an unusually large number of Harris Sparrows passing through but on several occasions they have been heard singing a low, warbling song. In every case the singers were birds of the first year or one year old birds.

THE YORK LAKE PROJECT - H. S. Swallow.

News that Ducks Unlimited is now undertaking work that will probably restore the level of York Lake is more than welcome to the residents of Yorkton. This lake, four miles south of Yorkton and now a forlorn and weedy waste was at one time an attractive summer resort providing good swimming, boating and fishing.

At that time York Lake was mainly kept full by the spring overflow from the nearby Rousay Lakes and these lakes were in turn fed by two creeks, one Reusch's Creek coming in from the south-west and a larger creek, the Willowbrook Creek from the north-west. With the building of the highway to Willowbrook and beyond the main flow of water from the latter creek, which in this vicinity flows out in meadows and not in a well defined creek, was diverted north to Cussed Creek. Ducks Unlimited now proposes to deepen an old drainage ditch so that the water from Willowbrook Creek will have a well controlled flow to the Rousay Lakes. It will also be necessary to dig another ditch with control gates between Upper and Lower Rousay Lakes. There is already a ditch between the latter lake and York Lake.

The Yorkton Fish and Game League was largely responsible for interesting Ducks Unlimited in this project as the Rousay marshes provide a splendid breeding area for waterfowl. Thus the work now under construction will serve two purposes. The sportsmen will have their birds and fish and the city of Yorkton its beauty spot restored.

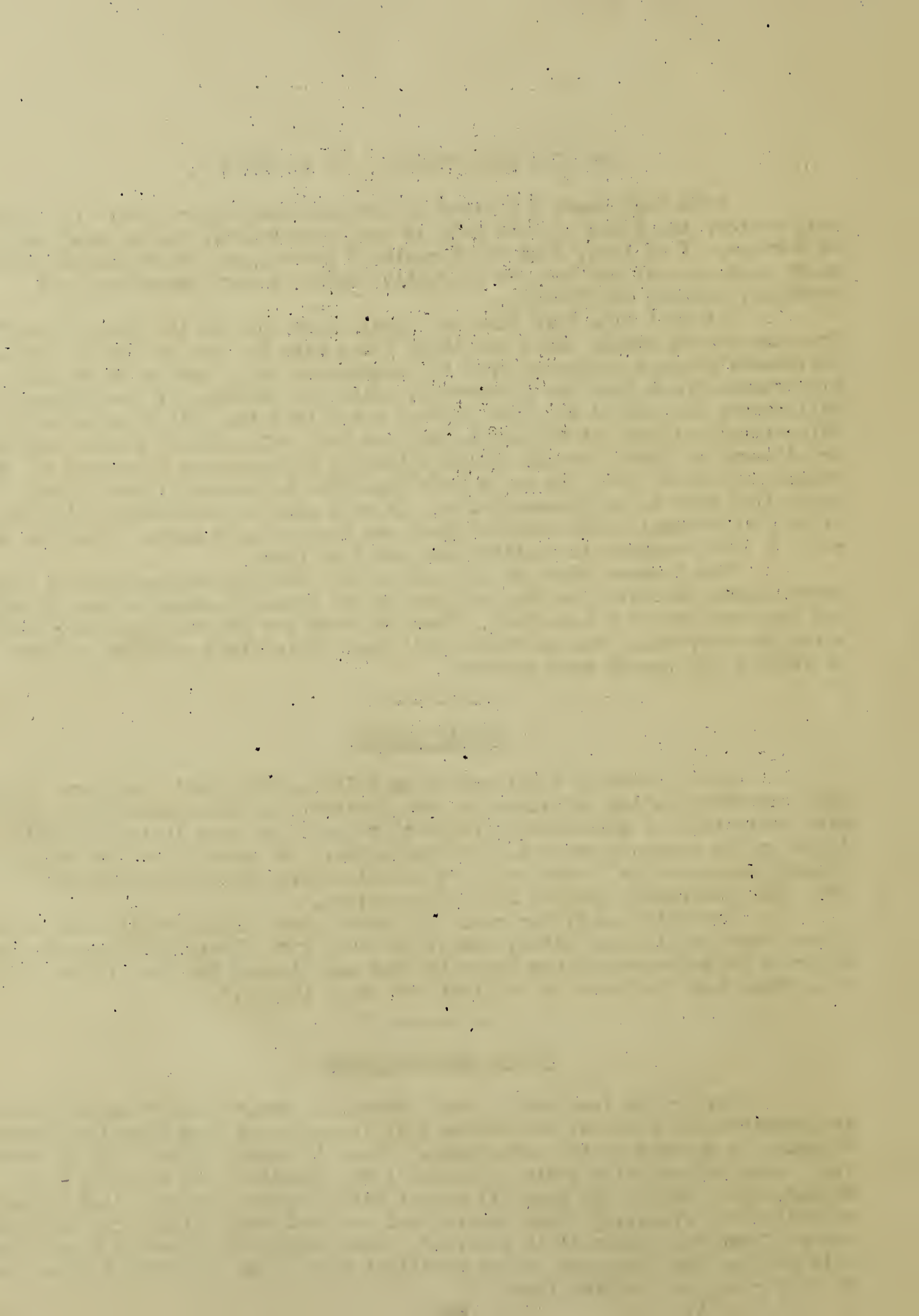
INDIAN RELICS

J. H. Yerex of Clair writes as follows, "The past few years I have been gathering Indian artifacts in this district and have accumulated quite a nice collection of specimens, perhaps there would be room in the bulletin later on for comments and notes on this hobby. It seems to me the two are closely connected as I have made several fine bird observations while tramping over the countryside hunting for Indian relics.

Probably localities could be listed where Indian relics are to be found, such as old camp sites, burial grounds, etc. There is plenty of native material in Saskatchewan for any collector and listing the localities would be a great help to those who collect the above things."

JUNIOR AUDUBON CLUBS

During the last school year there were twenty Junior Audubon Clubs in Saskatchewan, probably the number will increase now that Canadian Nature Magazine is sponsoring the membership. There is a most active club at Bertwell (some twenty-five miles south of Hudson's Bay Junction) and recently Dick Walker, Secretary of the Bertwell School Civic League sent us a list of spring migration and flowering dates and several original compositions "as an indication of our keen interest in nature." These compositions were not only very well written but also gave one an excellent idea of the wildlife in that area. We really enjoyed reading them.



PROVINCIAL NOTES

Arthur Ward has sent us particulars of the bird banding trap he uses at Burnham, "right on the bare prairie apart from any bush area." Last year he banded 51 birds but this year has only taken 24 as with an abundance of water in the vicinity the birds were less attracted to that within the trap. Two robins retaken this year, had bands dated 1940 and 1941 and a Barn Swallow banded in 1941 returned to the same nesting place. His list includes Says Phoebe, Lark Sparrow and Spotted Towhee, species we never, or else rarely see in the north-eastern part of Saskatchewan.

From Wolseley comes the story of a wren, tame enough to perch on the head or hands of members of the Garden family. J. R. Garden writes: "This past summer we had wrens nesting at the back of our house. The parent birds would often fly in the porch to catch flies and got so friendly that one day my daughter, when watching them feed their young, held out her hand and the male bird jumped on it and started to peck it. I too held out my hand and he did the same thing and then I offered him a green caterpillar which he ate from my fingers. He would often perch on my head and peck it or he would sit on a bough about a foot from my face as though he had a notion to go for my eyes. Sometimes he would sing but most often he seemed in a fighting attitude. The female bird could not be persuaded to come near us and as soon as the young left the nest her mate too would have nothing more to do with us.

Although hunting big game near Arborfield last November, Dr. R. W. Kirkby of Prince Albert brought back a tiny animal trophy which is now mounted and on view in the Provincial Museum.

According to the doctor it happened like this: one evening a suspicious noise was heard coming from the bread box suspended from the limb of a tree just outside the cabin door. The irate hunters, suspecting a rat, failed to capture the intruder in a first attempt but later on that night got it with a well-aimed blow and found to their dismay the visitor was a Flying Squirrel.

The point of interest to Dr. Kirkby was the nocturnal habit of this animal, as he had previously believed "that all squirrels went to bed with the light" and he thinks that perhaps some of our readers may be under the same impression.

Flying Squirrels are apparently more common than is usually supposed. They are distinctly nocturnal in habit and are to be found throughout the wooded parts of western Canada. Quite recently in "Chickadee Notes" in the Winnipeg Free Press, there was an account of a Flying Squirrel which had occupied a bird house for two years at a Manitoba lakeside cottage. The editor of this column, A. G. Lawrence, points out that "this tiny animal has large lustrous eyes, as becomes a night prowler, tiny ears and thick velvety fur in buff-brown tones above and pure white below. Wide membranes join the fore and hind limbs and on these with legs outstretched the little glider 'flies' from tree to tree."

INFORMATION PLEASE

Purple Martins have taken so readily to nesting boxes in the West that we almost forget that holes and hollows in forest trees are the original nesting habitat of this species. In July, 1941, L. T. McKim discovered a colony of Martins nesting in a gully at Melville Beach on Crooked Lake. The birds were using old flicker holes in dead poplars.

This year, on Aug. 19, Mrs. Priestly and Miss Lloyd saw a tremendous gathering of Purple Martins on wires and buildings at the Yorkton Fair Grounds. Local birds nesting in bird boxes could not have accounted for more than a few of the number seen, so this huge congregation must either have collected from a very large area, or else there must exist many more "wild" nesting places such as Mr. McKim describes than we have previously suspected. Has anyone else come across a colony of Martins in the wild?

What is the Magpie situation in other parts of the province? In the Yorkton district we have noted a marked increase of these handsome but nevertheless rather undesirable birds.

One evening early in August a bat was discovered hanging from a branch of one of the boulevard elms on Wallace Ave., and was thoughtlessly destroyed before an irate junior member of our society arrived on the scene. This bat, with silver tips to its black fur, was apparently a specimen of the Silver-haired Bat. A few years ago Jack Culver, now with the United States Air Force, caught a Red Bat in one of the local elevators and that is the extent of our knowledge of bats in this area. Perhaps someone can provide a few notes on the distribution of these little known creatures.

We should be glad to receive any nature items from local newspapers for our files and for use in "The Blue Jay."

Do Bitterns vary their diet in early summer by adding the eggs or young of smaller marsh birds to their menu? On June 8 some of the younger members of our society were searching for a Black Tern's nest at the "Muskeg" when a Bittern suddenly rose out of the reeds closely pursued by two infuriated Red-winged Blackbirds. One bird, apparently the female, soon fell out but the other bird kept up the chase till both were out of sight behind some trees.

Incidentally, it might be mentioned that after reducing all the Terns in the marsh to a state of absolute frenzy and disturbing every nesting duck, a Tern's nest with one egg was finally discovered by Vernon Barnes. The nest was on a hummock of mud, just near the extreme edge of the reed bed close to open water.

With reference to Mr. Ward's letter on Page 5, it would be interesting to have a complete list of bird banders in the province. We should like to hear from anyone doing this work

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of various factors on the growth and development of the human body. The study is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the factors that influence human growth and development, including genetic, environmental, and nutritional factors. The study is divided into three main sections: the first section discusses the genetic factors that influence growth and development, the second section discusses the environmental factors, and the third section discusses the nutritional factors. The study is based on a review of the literature and on data collected from a series of experiments conducted over a period of six months.

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CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS

For many years the Audubon Society of the United States has sponsored a Christmas Bird Census. In Saskatchewan, the climate at that season of the year makes it rather difficult to comply with all regulations, one of which requires observers to be in the field for at least six hours. However, a provincial bird count of our own would be most interesting.

The idea is to make a count of all birds seen on any one day between Christmas and New Year; most often the intervening Sunday is chosen. All birds seen should be noted, both species and individuals. We would appreciate it if censuses were sent in as soon as completed so results could be published in the January issue of "The Blue Jay."

Last year on Dec. 29, within a radius of seven miles of Yorkton, Stuart Houston, Vernon Barnes and Neil Black, accompanied by Dr. C. J. Houston made a count of eight different species and, "believe it or not", of 447 birds.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS TO

"THE LIST OF BIRDS IDENTIFIED IN THE YORKTON DISTRICT IN RECENT YEARS"

Records supplied by L.T. McKim, Melville (within 30 mile radius of Yorkton):

Cinnamon Teal. May 25, 1941. Sight record within town limits.

Ring-necked Duck. Seen in spring migration for past ten years, but not noted this year.

Turnstone. May 15, 1940 at the Dam.

Red-backed Sandpiper or Dunlin. May 22, 1940 at the Dam.

Stilt Sandpiper. May 22, 1940 at the Dam.

Sanderling. Not uncommon in migration.

Lark Bunting. June 3, 1934 and June 12, 1935 near Old Folk's Home.

McCowan's Longspur. One record just west of Melville, May 25, 1935.

Yorkton Record:

Juvenile Virginia Rails noted at the Muskeg, July 17, 1942.

Correction:

In our list, Page 5, line 34, for Eastern Towhee read Spotted Towhee. The Yorkton Bird List mentioned above was compiled from records of recent years and mimeographed July 1942. A few copies are still available at ten cents from the secretary.

FINIS

We present this first issue of "The Blue Jay" fully conscious of its many, and probably glaring, shortcomings. We know there is a quotation that "fools rush in.....". Maybe it applies in our case, but anyway we should like to receive frank comment, criticism and suggestions so that we can make further issues of our bulletin of greater value to nature lovers of the province.

We wish to thank certain members who have given an extra donation to assist in meeting the cost of the Bulletin. Will anyone who has found it of interest please bring our Society to the notice of other nature lovers? Copies of this issue are still available for new members.

